



## **Rural America: High-Speed Access... or Net Neutrality?**

Rural America has an urgent need for high-speed Internet access choices. Better communications networks not only mean remaining competitive economically, they also bring access to better education opportunities and advanced medical services.

After years of delays, cooperation among state and local governments and private industry is finally bringing broadband choices to rural Americans. **According to 2008 figures from ConnectKentucky, for example, 95 percent of the state's households can now buy high-speed Internet service, up from 60 percent in 2004.**

But Net Neutrality's legal delays will slow this progress and make consumer broadband more expensive. That's because Net Neutrality upends the current shared funding system for deploying tomorrow's Internet. Under this system, Net users and huge online companies alike pay for their broadband access. This shared responsibility has helped drive down the cost of users' access fees by more than 50 percent since 1999.

But net neutrality would create a legal loophole allowing the Internet's heaviest users – online companies such as Google and eBay – to avoid paying anything for deploying new access choices. As a result, net neutrality will increase the financial burden on ordinary users.

“Those who advocate for so-called net neutrality are in fact making sure that no such network gets built for the foreseeable future **and rural America gets left further behind.**”

Jimmy Gurganus, Vice President for Telecommunications,  
Communications Workers of America, [CWA Telecom News](#), December 2006

The **National Grange** is on record that Net Neutrality “stands to seriously delay the benefits of new broadband deployment....” The Grange also expressed concern about Net Neutrality's impact on “telecommuting, telemedicine and the ability of small rural businesses to compete in global markets – all of which are vital to the economic future of rural communities.”

This is no time to tie Internet deployment down in red tape and litigation. On the two most important issues for tomorrow's Internet – who's going to use it and how much will it cost – Net Neutrality undermines current progress and takes us in the wrong direction.